

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BRASIL 08923 01 OF 02 262010Z

51

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6619

INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 8923

E. O. 11652: XGDS1

TAGS: PINS, BR

SUBJECT: ELECTORAL POST-MORTEM WITH MEMBERS OF THE POLITICAL CLASS

SUMMARY: DISCUSSIONS WITH HIGHLY REPRESENTATIVE MEMBERS OF THE POLITICAL CLASS DISCLOSED THAT THERE IS A FEELING OF BITTERNESS WITH REGARD TO POLITICAL ERRORS COMMITTED BY THE GOVERNMENT IN ITS HANDLING OF THE ELECTIONS. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE ARENA NATIONAL LEADERSHIP WILL BE RESHUFFLED. THE MILITARY IS NOT EXPECTED TO REACT AGAINST THE MDB VICTORY BUT A STRONG ARENA SHOWING IN THE 1976 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS WILL BE NECESSARY TO RESTORE MILITARY CONFIDENCE IN THAT PARTY'S CAPABILITIES FOR THE 1978 CONGRESSIONAL AND GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS. ONE SOURCE HAD BEEN INFORMED BY GENERAL GOLBERY THAT THE EXECUTIVE WILL ASSERT CONTROL OVER THE SECURITY APPARATUS WITHIN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS IN ORDER TO AVOID INCIDENTS WHICH MIGHT LEAD TO PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES OF INQUIRY WHICH MIGHT IN TURN GENERATE MILITARY REACTION. ANOTHER SOURCE OBSERVED THAT THE DECOMPRESSION PROCESS WAS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE RETENTION OF IA 5 POWERS BY THE GOVERNMENT. THE ELECTORAL DEFEAT UNDER THE PREVAILING STATE OF EXCEPTIONAL POWERS WAS DANGEROUS IN
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BRASIL 08923 01 OF 02 262010Z

GIVING THE POPULANCE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE

GOVERNMENT WAS IN A WEAK POSITION. END SUMMARY:.

1. EMBASSY OFFICER PARTICIPATED IN EXTENDED CONVERSATION ON ARENA ELECTION DEFEAT WITH DEPUTY FLAVIO MARCILIO, PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, SENATOR VIRGILION TAVORA, MAJORITY LEADER OF THE SENATE, AND CARLOS CHAGAS, BRASILIA AGENCY CHIEF OF THE "ESTADO DO SAO PAULO".

THE FOLLOWING WERE THE PRINCIPAL POINTS MADE:

A. RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DEFEAT MUST BE ASSIGNED TO GENERAL GOLBERY, CHIEF OF THE CIVIL HOUSEHOLD, MINISTER OF JUSTICE ARMANDO FALCAO, AND ARENA PARTY PRESIDENT PETRONIO PORTELLA. THEY HAD IMPOSED CANDIDATES OVER THE OBJECTIONS OF LOCAL PARTY DIRECTORATES IN A NUMBER OF STATES AND THEY REAPED THE RESULTS WHEN THE CANDIDATES PROVED TO BE POLITICALLY NON-VIABLE. ALL AGREED THAT PORTELLA'S POLITICAL FUTURE WAS LIMITED AND THAT THE ARENA NATIONAL COMMITTEE WOULD BE RESHUFFLED. MARCILIO ADDED THAT IN ANY SORT OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY, GOLBERY AND FALCAO WOULD RESIGN AS A RESULT OF THEIR FAILURE. HE MADE THE SAME POINT ABOUT MINISTER OF EDUCATION NEY BRAGA, WHO HAD IMPOSED HIS CANDIDATES IN THE STATE OF PARANA AND WHO DID NOT LIFT A FINGER TO HELP THEM.

B. THE MILITARY ARE NOT EXPECTED TO REACT AGAINST ELECTIONS AT THIS TIME. TAVORA STATED THAT MILITARY LEADERS HAD "WRINKLED THEIR NOSES" AT THE RESULT BUT WOULD BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT THEM. BOTH TAVORA AND MARCILIO STATE THAT IT WAS NECESSARY FOR ARENA TO RECOUP BY MAKING A STRONG SHOWING IN THE 1976 ELECTION FOR MAYORS. A FAILURE IN '76 WOULD, IN THEIR OPINION, CARRY A STRONG POSSIBILITY OF SOME FORM OF MILITARY INTERVENTION. BOTH MEN WERE CONFIDENT THAT THE PARTY WOULD DO WELL AND THUS REASSURE THE MILITARY WITH REGARD TO THE 1978 CONGRESSIONAL AND GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS.

C. TAVORA AND MARCILIO WERE CONVINCED THAT THE 1974 ELECTION RESULTS WERE DUE TO A NUMBER OF POLITICAL ERRORS, PRINCIPALLY REVOLVING AROUND IMPOSITION OF CANDIDATES BY THE EXECUTIVE. WHILE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS COMPOUNDED THE ARENA DIFFICULTIES, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BRASIL 08923 01 OF 02 262010Z

IN THEIR VIEW, THEY WERE NOT DECISIVE. IN DISCUSSING THE SAO PAULO ELECTIONS, MARCILIO AGREED THAT DELFIM NETO MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO STEM THE MDB TIDE IF HE HAD BEEN SELECTED AS GOVERNOR. HE INSISTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE VOTE COUNT WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH CLOSER, AND HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CONSERVE THE ARENA MAJORITY IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE. CHAGAS ADDED THAT THE 8 MILLION 18-21 AGE VOTERS

WHO WERE ALIENATED FROM THE REGIME WERE ALSO INFLUENTIAL IN BRINGING ABOUT THE MDB VICTORY.

D. AS FAR AS EXTERNAL FACTORS WERE CONCERNED, MARCILIO WAS CONVINCED THAT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY VICTORY IN THE U.S. AND THE PORTUGUESE AND GREEK COUPS WERE IMPORTANT ELEMENTS IN INFLUENCING THE BRAZILIAN VOTE.

E. CHANGAS STATED THAT GENERAL GOLBERY HAD INFORMED HIM THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD "LAY THEIR HANDS" ON THE SECURITY ORGANS PRIOR TO THE MARCH CONGRESSIONAL SESSION. IN ADDITION TO BEING PART OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS FOR DECOMPRESSION, IT WAS GOLBERY'S HOPE TO AVOID SERIOUS INCIDENTS OF TORTURE WHICH WOULD LEAD INEVITABLY TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY BY THE MDB. IN GOLBERY'S VIEW, SUCH A COMMISSION OF INQUIRY WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY PROVOKE A MILITARY REACTION. BOTH MARCILIO AND TAVORA WERE HIGHLY SKEPTICAL ABOUT BOTH GOLBERY'S INTENT TO INTERFERE WITH THE SECURITY APPARATUS OR HIS CAPABILITY FOR DOING SO. IN THEIR VIEW, GOLBERY'S REMARKS WERE PART OF HIS PUBLIC RELATIONS APPROACH TO THE JOURNALISTS.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 BRASIL 08923 02 OF 02 262017Z

51

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INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BRASILIA 8923

2. EMBASSY OFFICER ALSO MET WITH GOVERNOR-ELECT AURELIANO CHAVES OF MINAS GERAIS WHO HAS MANAGED TO

RETAIN AN ARENA MAJORITY IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE WHILE THE ARENA CANDIDATE FOR THE SENATE LOST. CHAVES WAS IN BRASILIA FOR MEETINGS WITH GENERAL GOLBERY AS WELL AS GOVERNORS PAULO EGYDIO MARTINS OF SAO PAULO AND SINVAL GUAZELI OF RIO GRANDE DO SUL, IN ORDER TO ANALYZE THE RESULT OF THE ELECTIONS AND FORMULATE FUTURE PLANS. CHAVES CONFIRMED THAT THE ARENA NATIONAL COMMITTEE HAD TO BE STRENGTHENED, WHICH NECESSARILY IMPLIED DROPPING PETRONIO PORTELLA. HE ALSO AGREED THAT THE 1976 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS WOULD BE MOST IMPORTANT. HE CONSIDERED THE MDB VICTORY A HEALTHY PHENOMENON IN SOME RESPECTS, SINCE IT WOULD FORCE THE ARENA TO ACT SERIOUSLY AS A POLITICAL PARTY. HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT SOME OF THE RADICAL ELEMENTS WHO HAVE MANAGED TO BE ELECTED IN THE MDB LANDSLIDE. HE CONSIDERED THE MOST IMPORTANT TASK AT HAND TO GET RID OF THE OLD, TIRED POLITICAL LEADERS AND REPLACE THEM WITH SOME OF THE YOUNGER ARENA POLITICIANS. HE BELIEVED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S POLITICAL-INTELLIGENCE-COLLECTING CAPABILITY WOULD HAVE TO BE RESTRUCTURED, SINCE IT FAILED MISERABLY TO WARN OF THE MAGNITUDE OF THE MDB VICTORY. THE GOVERNMENT'S EMERGENCY WAGE
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PAGE 02 BRASIL 08923 02 OF 02 262017Z

INCREASE WAS, IN HIS VIEW, ESSENTIALLY COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE, PARTLY BECAUSE IT WAS SO CRASS AN ELECTORAL MOVE AND PARTLY BECAUSE THE MDB MANAGED TO TAKE SOME OF THE CREDIT FOR IT. IT WAS HIS THOUGHT THAT THE DECOMPRESSION PROCESS WAS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE POSSESSION BY THE GOVERNMENT OF SUCH INSTRUMENTS OF POWER AS INSTITUTIONAL ACT NO. 5, AND THAT THE MDB TOOK FULL ADVANTAGE OF THAT ANOMALY. WHAT MADE IT DANGEROUS WAS THAT HAVING LOST THE ELECTION WHILE IN FULL POSSESSION OF SUCH EXCEPTIONAL POWERS, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE JUDGED BY THE POPULACE TO BE IN A WEAK POSITION.

3. COMMENT: ALL THE BRAZILIAN PARTICIPANTS IN THE ABOVE CONVERSATIONS ARE HIGHLY KNOWLEDGEABLE POLITICAL OBSERVERS WITH ACCESS TO HIGH LEVELS OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE POLITICIANS INVOLVED ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HIGHER ECHELON OF THE BRAZILIAN POLITICAL CLASS. THE BASIC IMPRESSION WE OBTAINED WAS ONE OF BITTERNESS AT THE MISMANAGEMENT OF THE ELECTIONS ON THE PART OF THE EXECUTIVE, AS WELL AS THE BASIC CONVICTIONS THAT THE ARENA WILL RECOUP AND IS CAPABLE OF A BETTER PERFORMANCE. WE ARE INTRIGUED AT CHAGAS' REPORT OF HIS CONVERSATION WITH GENERAL GOLBERY. WHILE BRINGING THE SECURITY APPARATUS UNDER CLOSER CENTRAL CONTROL IS A LOGICAL MOVE ON THE PART OF THE EXECUTIVE, WE

SHARE MARCILIO'S AND TAVORA'S SKEPTICISM AS TO
GOLBERY'S CAPABILITY OF ENFORCING THE EXECUTIVE'S
PRIMACY. ON THE OTHER HAND, OUR OWN CONVERSATIONS
WITH GENERAL GOLBERY LEAD US TO THE CONCLUSION THAT
HE IS NOT LACKING IN GOOD FAITH.
JOHNSON

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